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The closed academy? Guild power and academic social class

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Abstract

Academic inbreeding is a deeply ingrained practice which needs to be understood by reference to the medieval guilds. Drawing on the guild concept and associated benefits of forms of capital, a distinction is drawn between 'guild-route' academics who have followed a privileged, linear path into academe and their 'non-guild' counterparts who tend to enter later in their career from the professions or industry, often without a PhD. The tendency to represent early career researchers from a guild background as members of an academic proletariat is largely misleading and fails to take account of their privileged entrée into academe. Their experience is contrasted with those recruited via the non-guild route who do not have the benefits of the valued social, cultural or symbolic capital needed to advance their careers. Policy implications are discussed to better understand the effects of academic social class on recruitment practices in universities.

摘要

要了解學術近親繁殖的現象，必須從學者行會力量對其造成根深蒂固的影響的角度理解 。學者透過行會力量的相關資本可獲得巨大利益。學者的培養背景可分為兩種：一種為學術行會背景出身的學者；另一種為業界實務背景出身的學者。通常在學術生涯的發展中，前者的純學術訓練出身有顯著的背景優勢；後者通常進入學術領域的時間較晚，而且沒有博士學位。學者行會背景出身的年輕學者經常被認為是學者無產階層，但事實上卻忽略了他們加入學術界所具有的優勢。與其迥然不同的是，業界實務背景

出身的學者並不具有所需要的社會、文化或象徵資本的優勢來發展他們的學術生涯。最後，本文對大學相關制度進行建議，包括大學教師招聘制度。

1 | INTRODUCTION

Academic inbreeding is normally defined as 'a recruitment practice in which universities hire their own graduates as faculty directly after doctoral graduation' (Horta et al., 2011, p. 36). Yet, academic inbreeding needs to be understood on the network as well as institutional level. The research students of senior professors at research-intensive universities are part of these wider networks of relevantly similar institutions. This directly influences the hiring of academic staff at a cluster of other, elite universities (Shin et al., 2016).

Academic inbreeding has always been the basis for the reproduction of the academic profession, but it needs to be understood as a continuing historical reflection of the university's medieval roots. In contemporary times, however, there has been a tendency to characterise inbreeding as a corrupt departure from egalitarian and meritocratic norms via the nepotistic employment of doctoral students as junior academics in research-intensive universities. This is how inbreeding now appears seriously out of step, particularly in Western society, where privilege based on social connections is considered as outdated as a hereditary system of absolute rule. Yet meritocratic and egalitarian principles are themselves the invention of a liberal conception of higher education for both students (formerly 'pupils') and academics (formerly 'masters') who work within universities. These liberal principles have gained traction since the mid 19th century when universities first started to admit religious minorities and others formerly labelled as 'heretics', as well as becoming more open to women and working-class students. Liberal principles are now perceived to be in conflict with the roots of academic nepotism, but the continuing power of a guild system of academic recruitment means that while such principles are virtue signalled by the modern university, they are still widely overridden in practice.

This paper will explore the medieval origins of academic inbreeding and explain how this underpins sustained inequalities between guild-route and non-guild-route academics. It will be argued that guild-route academics are best able to gain full access to valued social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) to secure a higher status (increased position and thus power) within the academic hierarchy, maximising the personal benefits that derive from academic capitalism, prestige and cronyism. Non-guild-route academics, by contrast, are less able to leverage these advantages.

2 | THE MEDIEVAL GUILD AND THE PhD

The origins of the university were as a corporate body of equals making decisions on a collective basis. It operated in parallel with the medieval guild but with a strong hierarchical structure (Wilson, 1942). The Latin word *universitas* implied a guild, of which there were various types for occupationally related merchants and artisans (Epstein, 1998; Ogilvie, 2011; Renard, 1918), and scholastic guilds consisting of pupils and masters (Rashdall, 1895). These were the original universities in medieval times associated with teaching using the critical method of philosophical analysis. They were established without the formal authorisation of the monarchy or the church but were later recognised by them, such as the University of Paris, originally named *Universitas magistrorum et scholarium* (a guild of masters and scholars) (Classen, 1981). Guilds enjoyed the right to self-determination, what today we would call institutional autonomy, granted to the medieval academic guilds of masters by church and state because of the benefits their activities were perceived to offer to society. They were permitted to develop their own rules and regulations and govern their own affairs without interference from external authorities. The basis of the concept

of academic tenure is rooted in the privileges of scholastic guilds. Hence, guilds sought to develop exclusive benefits for members and were, in today's terms, elitist organisations that promoted credentialism, cronyism and the privileges of the old boy network (Miller & Fox, 1998).

It is no accident that the Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities founded in 2016 is the name chosen to represent a contemporary grouping of 15 elite institutions with ancient origins; members such as the University of Paris and the Jagiellonian University originated as medieval guilds in the 12th and 14th century, respectively. The guild concept may be perceived as an irrelevance in a contemporary environment where universities are increasingly seen as subject to managerial processes and assumptions based on the metaphor of the free market. The power of the professoriate and, with it, traditional guild power, is thought to be on the wane due to the emphasis since the 1980s on new public management (e.g., Enders, 2000). This means that the notion of academic self-governance has withered (Shattock, 2014). Yet, this is not the only element of the guild tradition and ironically, at an individual level, those academics who are inbred in the traditions of research scholarship are much better equipped to manage the neoliberal pressures for the university to become more performance-driven since they know how to publish and obtain funding through leveraging their social networks. In many respects, the guild concept persists in modern higher education despite the trappings of modernity associated with the public adoption of more open recruitment processes and a widening participation agenda for students.

By the 19th century, the scholastic guild concept had evolved into a system of advancement in the eight Prussian universities which subsequently became the model for the rest of the world, with the doctorate in philosophy as the entry qualification for the academic profession. Outstanding students who had obtained their doctorate would seek to become a *Privatdocent* once they had passed their *Habilitation*, through further scholarly work (Arnold, 1882). The *Privatdocent* was, in effect, an apprentice and was not in receipt of a salary. They were reliant on charging fees for lectures in competition with full professors but were not allowed to charge less than their masters, a rule that kept full professors up to the mark and ensured that the *Privatdocent* was kept hungry and had 'every motive to exert himself' (Arnold, 1882, p. 143). If they did not perform well, they did not make a living or progress any further in their academic career. The next step was for a *Privatdocent* to seek to become a professor extraordinary, only some of whom received a salary. This again made perceptions of their performance in providing lectures critical to the prospect of any further advancement to full professor. It is only then that a fixed salary was assured on condition of giving at least two free public lectures per week each semester but with the opportunity to top up their income via examination fees and further fee-charging lectures. The Prussian universities also had much in common with the guilds in terms of self-governance. The senate consisted of the incoming and outgoing rector (or president/vice chancellor) responsible for internal affairs, and each elected for just 1 year, together with a full professor selected from the four faculties (theology, law, medicine and philosophy). The faculty would consist of a dean, again elected for a single year only, together with the full professors.

The Prussian system has subsequently formed the basis for the academic profession across the world mainly through the export of the PhD to the United States (US) and, later, to the United Kingdom (UK) in the 1920s, with tenure systems that place heavy demands on academic apprentices with the ultimate prize of job security and a steady income once this hurdle has been surmounted. What is notable is that the Prussian system was highly competitive. While it was formed around teaching rather than research, through the giving of lectures, the model parallels modern academic tenure in the sense that junior academics, the *Privatdocents* or assistant professors of today, were made to compete hard to gain membership through advancement. This system perhaps helps to explain why the jobs market for academics remained largely closed to open recruitment processes until the 1960s with masters taking care of their apprentices in the way of the medieval guild (Wilson, 1942). Academic positions were often not formally advertised and senior academics would act as brokers in helping to fill any vacancies. This old boy network meant that senior academics held key information about where job opportunities existed and, in effect, helped to control the marketplace. The power of elite social networks in both developed and developing contexts means that the recruitment process is still at least partially closed. Even in the early 2000s, it was estimated that between 90 and 100 per cent of academic hires in Spain and Italy were confined to internal or local

candidates (Gui et al., 2002). Closed hiring practices and cronyism also continue to prevail in Asian cultures such as Vietnam (Pham & Nguyen, 2020) and Japan (Horta et al., 2011).

3 | GUILD-ROUTE AND NON-GUILD-ROUTE ACADEMICS

The concept of social groups is nothing new; it can be traced back to the early social *phulon* (Donlan, 1985) among Dark Age Greeks, or the male drinking clubs and social banquets of classical Greece and Rome (Black, 2017; Hänninen, 2015). These social events were an important, ceremonial component of medieval guilds (Black, 2017), the long-distance trading associations referred to as 'Universitas' or 'Hansa' (Ogilvie, 2014; Põder, 2010). The origins of the term 'guild' in the 1st century AD—*Gilda*—signified the reinforcement of 'social solidarity' through the ceremonial act of the banquet (Black, 2017; Hänninen, 2015). Ogilvie (2011, p. 1), suggesting that the social gatherings of these 'privileged associations', solely focused on attaining social capital for the economic growth of the guild, were used to pressure group members to conform, to reinforce cultural identity. The original guilds provided privileges for members such as exemption from taxes, better working hours and a badge of quality. Though we have now come to associate the idea of the guild as being a professional organisation, the original Germanic *gilt* meant 'fraternities of young warriors practising the cult of heroes' (Le Bras, 1940–1941, p. 316 note, cited in Black, 2017), which one could argue is analogous with the idea of the university.

The medieval trade and craft guilds had steep entry fees and continuing dues to keep entry selective and, with increasing political motives, they became more exclusionary over time (Renard, 1918). They worked by a system of apprentices and masters (Epstein, 1998), and enforced quality standards through completion of training and the protection of membership. Similarly, the modern university has yearly tuition fees for entry and the concept of the exit qualification, the qualification of the degree, as its measure of standardisation and quality. In some of the oldest institutions such as Oxford and Cambridge which retain their original form of segregation, being 'endowed houses under the supervision of a master' (University of Oxford, 2020), the modern colleges continue to undertake ritual social practices such as the medieval custom of ceremonial dining for institutional maintenance (Dacin et al., 2010), in supporting and strengthening their identity and beliefs.

Guilds provided transferable skills; students would be apprenticed (the modern equivalent of the bachelor) to become a craftsman (graduate/master's student) before spending several years as a journeyman (doctoral student) before getting the chance to be elected as a master (doctoral graduate) (Huisman, 2012) on payment of a fee and the production of a masterpiece (the doctoral thesis). The masters of the medieval guild could recover costs associated with training their 'students' by making them work for wages below the market rate once they had reached a certain skill level (Epstein, 1998). This practice is akin to the use of doctoral students to teach undergraduate seminars in the modern university setting. Even in the contemporary university business school, PhD students are seen as the modern equivalent to the apprentices found in the medieval craft guilds, while the tenured faculty parallel the guild masters (Miles, 2016).

Just as the university is the space in which scholars carry out their academic roles, the guildhall was the equivalent for these medieval training associations called guilds. A symbolic value was conferred on the guildhalls, as the 'ceremonial stage' upon which the guild carried out its acts of social relations to solidify its identity; it was a symbol of power and authority (Giles, 1999). The same could be argued for the modern university, imbued with the prestige of not only the institution but the centre of what is still seen as an 'elite', scholarly career in academe. The functionalist, structural interpretation of buildings would argue that the space itself is not merely a 'container for human action, but is active in the construction and maintenance of social relations and power structures' (Giles, 1999, p. 14). The concept of 'space syntax', coupled with Durkheim's theories on society as used by Hillier and Hanson (1989), tells us that spaces reflect the society which used them. The group structures and shared values and beliefs of the medieval guild members, who Durkheim (1982) referred to as "technical" societies, is reflected in the segregated and dispersed spaces of the medieval guildhall itself. The university as a physical space

mirrors the medieval guildhall with its segregated spaces yet communal, 'public' areas for rituals (Giles, 1999). Within the university, scholars are separated by physical divisions such as different buildings and office spaces for the faculty or field of study. Within the discipline itself, scholars are divided by department, level and type of work they carry out. The physical division within the university reflects the social structure, practices and sociopolitical complexity of modern academia, where smaller, closed groups form within the larger 'guild' of academia itself.

In a similar way to which symbolic value was transferred to the guildhalls by the guild members, symbolic prestige is endowed upon the university today. The university's 'members', both students and academic staff, are imbued with prestige by association which can influence hiring decisions leading to cumulative advantage of those already in positions of privilege. As 'networks of knowledge and learning' (Huisman, 2012, p. 4), modern universities retain this function first seen in the guilds of old, providing a means for guild 'members' such as PhD students to travel to study under professors—the masters of their field—to become professors themselves.

Papers exploring inbreeding in university life understandably focus on the advantages enjoyed by those we could refer to as 'elite' academics, entering higher education via what we have labelled the 'guild route'. Akin to the journeymen of the medieval guilds, their modern counterpart is the PhD student who has studied for and completed a PhD on a full-time basis at an elite, research-intensive university to become a 'master' themselves. This usually follows acquisition of prior qualifications—normally bachelor and master's degrees—also undertaken at research-intensive institutions (if not the same one) without ever leaving academe. They are imbued with the prestige, and the symbolic, cultural and social capital, of the institution which they attended and of the professors under whom they studied.

Bourdieu (1987, p. 3) argued that social class is not merely 'homogeneous sets of economically and socially differentiated individuals', but rather a social space of relational positions, within which individuals struggle for power (through the acquisition of capital). Groups which arise within a social space exist solely through their relationship to one another, their positionality, and are defined by their 'distance'. Distinct from the general notion of social class, academic social class is a result of the relationship, and subsequent 'distance' in terms of knowledge, values and benefits, between those who are associated with the 'elite' research-intensive institutions and those who are associated with the lower-status, teaching-focused, more vocationally oriented institutions. In other words, academic social class is derived from leveraging the benefits of reputational prestige, capital and networks associated with a person's alma mater. Research-intensive universities, drawn from the Russell Group in the UK, the Group of 8 in Australia, and the Ivy League in the US, for example, are the most prestigious institutions where 'top-class' guild-route academics are trained, retained and prosper. In the UK there is a divide between the research-intensive Russell Group and the teaching-intensive universities which have a larger focus on vocational qualifications, where significantly fewer staff hold PhDs, and fewer, full professorial positions are available (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2020a, 2020b). Opportunities for full-time research training in teaching-intensive universities with smaller and fewer academic departments are scarce; where they do exist, academic supervisors will not necessarily possess the same elite networks or relevant social and cultural capital of the guild-route scholar to pass onto their students nor increase their own position in the academic hierarchy. The lower-status, teaching-intensive institutions do not imbue the same privilege and prestige through association, neither externally nor within their own ranks. This means that, while there are some inbred academics in teaching-intensive universities, they are relatively fewer in number and are at a disadvantage compared with their more privileged, guild-route cousins in research-intensive institutions.

4 | INHABITING THE 'RIGHT' HABITUS

If we therefore accept the existence of an elite 'guild route', one would automatically assume there must be an opposite, a 'non-guild route'. As previously established, the idea of the guild is exclusionary; non-guild does not necessarily mean you are part of an 'opposing' group, but rather are excluded for the privileged group. Drawn

from the 'world of work' rather than the traditional academic who has never left academe, non-guild academics are more likely to join a more teaching-intensive, vocationally oriented higher education institution, rather than an elite, research-intensive one—the original home of the guild-route academic. Where non-guild academics join a research-intensive university, they may be more likely to be offered a contract on 'teaching-only' terms as opposed to a more prestigious contract to both teach and undertake research (an 'all-round' contract). On entry into the higher education profession, many non-guild academics do not possess a PhD and may be required to complete this on a part-time basis as a mature student while working in the university as an academic member of staff.

In contrast to the traditional guild route, the non-traditional academic career route of the non-guild scholar often begins later in life, having spent a time working in the professions, the performing arts, business or industry. Each of the prior roles these non-guild scholars held could arguably be thought of as a smaller guild in itself; professions such as nursing, law and certain business occupations, including banking and marketing, have their own standards for entry and protections afforded through membership. In addition to their mismatch in valued capital between their non-academic, professional 'guild' and their new 'academic' guild, the collective habitus derived from these smaller, non-academic guilds is unlikely to help them understand the 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) in the field of higher education and research, affecting their perceptions of, and journey within, academia.

Often called 'late bloomers', these non-guild-route academics may be tied to specific geographic regions due to family obligations or a partner's job; prohibited from national job searches, they are restricted in the type of institution in which they can work (Karlgaard, 2019; Kim, 2019). Consequently, they may find themselves having to move around different institutions to 'get ahead'. Inherently mobile, they are unlikely to amass the prestige and valued capital required when compared to their relatively immobile guild-route counterparts, which may play a not insignificant part in the prevalence of academic inbreeding among the 'top', elite institutions (Altbach et al., 2015; Horta et al., 2010) in many nations, including Argentina (Rabossi, 2015), Poland (Kosmulski, 2015) and Spain (Cruz-Castro & Sanz-Menéndez, 2010; Rocca, 2007).

Bourdieu's (1977) concept of the *habitus* provides a way to analyse the social world and social practices, to explore the effect of this 'guild' membership in academe. A 'collective' habitus gained through group membership 'can directly shape the habitus and practices of individuals' (Burke et al., 2013, p. 167); although the habitus of individuals will vary, there is a co-operation between members of a group; it is a conformity of sorts, through affinity both within, and between, groups and the wider social field (Balmer et al., 2017; Burke et al., 2013). In other words, despite individual agency, guild membership will influence how the scholar perceives and experiences academe, with membership inherently providing distinct advantages over those who are not privy to the group's values and behaviours.

It is important to understand, and contrast, the effects of academic inbreeding on the divided fortunes of guild and non-guild academics. Early-career guild academics are often seen as victims of unfairness and inequality, based on conventional measures such as gender, family and caring responsibilities, and the prevalence of insecure, fixed-term contracts. Yet this group enjoys many inbuilt advantages in terms of capital which make claims to a proletarian identity suspect at best. Non-guild academics with their mismatch in social and cultural capital are the real proletarians, as opposed to those who have had a linear, guild route from PhD through to an early-career position such as a postdoctoral fellow. These non-guild academics are not only late starters but largely do not work in institutions where they can acquire sufficient social and cultural capital to enable them to move into the research-focused world of the guild academic. If they do work in elite, research-intensive universities they are likely to be even more disadvantaged as they are entering an environment where the guild tradition is most strongly established. Guilds are about exclusion rather than the modern liberal notion of inclusion, and about needing to be able to determine who is an insider and who is an outsider. New entrants need to perform behaviours and model themselves in the image of other insiders. Guild members already hold valued cultural, social and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) as 'traditional' academics. Unless non-guild members obtain a doctoral degree, understand how to conduct research, obtain prestigious funding and publish results in esteemed academic journals they will

remain outsiders. Even if they succeed in gaining entry in the university guild, they will not be able to enjoy the full benefits of guild membership as they do not have sufficient social capital (social connections) nor cultural capital (institutional qualification, embodied behaviours and symbolic prestige) which lifelong guild members possess.

Social and cultural capital appears to be strongly related to the advantages of academic inbreeding and guild membership. Bourdieu (1986) argued that education reproduces social inequality through 'hereditary transmission' (p. 244) of cultural capital; graduates of a university will, often unconsciously, acquire capital—in its various forms—through simply attendance and association. Guild academics not only acquire cultural capital in its institutionalised form by securing a doctoral qualification but also symbolic capital as institutional or departmental prestige (Bourdieu, 1986). Through attendance of this elite institution, they will embody the attitude and behaviours of the institution or department, and conform to its norms, values and beliefs.

Bourdieu (1986) referred to social capital as the acquisition of resources in the form of 'a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (p. 248); in other words, membership of an exclusive group which provides not only social capital but also a collective, cultural capital through symbolic exchange and mutual obligation. Acquiring social capital to enhance one's position involves building relationships; in relation to academic inbreeding, doctoral graduates of an institution will hold greater social capital through association with academic staff compared with external candidates for hire, as they have had the opportunity to build those vital, internal networks. Social capital is about knowing the 'right people' and having networks of well-connected colleagues for personal advancement from which collaborations and opportunities of various kinds flow. The term used to capture the essence of social capital in a British context is the 'old boy network' while equivalents exist elsewhere internationally such as 'guanxi' (China) and 'kancei' (Japan). On a practical level, social capital operates in academic life in the form of references and recommendations for studentships and professorial positions, and more subtly through the world of introductions at conferences, invitations to contribute to edited books and special issues of academic journals, co-authorship and citation rings. Co-authorship is indicative of symbolic and social capital inasmuch as prestige by association can flow from *who* someone publishes with, such as a senior intellectual figure in the field, as opposed to simply *what* is published. In this way intellectual, peer-to-peer capital is generated which can be valuable in network and career building. The social capital acquired from a relationship is greater than any one individual will hold; the individual is 'known to more people than they know' (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 251), a kind of 'reputational' capital if you will. By keeping access to group membership limited (such as with academic inbreeding—hiring one's own graduates) the group can reinforce its values and beliefs, maintaining its social and symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1986).

One of the most significant elements of social network activities is the hiring exchange of PhDs between departments and universities explaining more than 80 per cent of the variance in sociology departmental prestige (Burris, 2004). Here, there is a parallel with the exchange of marriage partners as in the Indian caste system. Whereas 'most prestigious academic departments rarely hire PhDs from lesser ranked departments, the converse is not true' (Burris, 2004, p. 244). This demonstrates the centrality of institutional status to academic prestige and the role of PhD exchange in reinforcing such divisions. Social capital will tend to work most to the advantage of academics at ancient, elite or research-intensive universities where the old boy network is most strongly established, as opposed to lower status, teaching-focused institutions. Bruce Truscot, writing in the 1940s, contrasted the advantages of working at Oxbridge rather than one of the (then, so-called) 'redbrick' universities, providing the following illustration:

The modern equivalent to the less highly esteemed 'Redbrick' to which Truscot refers is now represented by the 'new' universities consisting of the polytechnics and other institutions who mainly cater for students entering to study subjects leading to vocational, technical and semi-professional occupations. Hence, cultural capital relates to forms of knowledge, skills, education and advantages that give a person a higher status in society. This is acquired through the privileges associated with elite educational backgrounds and, with respect to academic life, this relates to tacit knowledge in connection with teaching and research. Academic inbreeding produces an understanding of the rules needed to succeed in the 'research game' (Lucas, 2006), central to which is now

grant getting in addition to writing for publication, as well as the unconscious *doxa* (Bourdieu, 1977; Deer, 2012) inherent in guild membership. Knowing how to 'do' research is developed as a doctoral student and as a junior academic working in a series of postdoctoral appointments. These not only help to build the social capital through connections needed to succeed but, critically, knowledge of how to write for publication and gain research-grant funding, the latter of which has become increasingly important as academic capitalism has taken hold. Guild-route academics have invariably benefited from mentoring and inclusion through participating in a mentor's research project. This experience will mean that they 'may be better able to cope with the challenges of their own research later' (Sassi & Thomas, 2012, p. 840).

In addition to the conscious awareness of the steps required to gain capital, to increase one's power and position in the field of higher education, this unconscious, taken-for-grantedness (*doxa*) (Deer, 2012) is exhibited by those of guild membership, in which 'each agent tacitly accords by the mere fact of acting in accordance with social convention' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 169). They implicitly know the 'rules of the game'; expected behaviours and predispositions are inherited through membership. This *doxa* can be thought of as a form of symbolic power mediated by the accumulation of capital which 'relates to the habitus and power structure of relatively autonomous social fields which have their own specific logic and necessity' (Deer, 2012, p. 117). The field of higher education could be considered to be one of those autonomous social fields; guild-route academics inherently understand the requirements for succeeding in 'elite' research circles which have their own rules and logic, which will contrast with those of the various fields of work with which non-guild-route academics are familiar.

Many junior guild academics have been in full-time education all their adult lives and have enjoyed the sponsorship of parents and influential senior supervisors. These 'traditional' academics are often from privileged, wealthy backgrounds—the middle classes (Manstead, 2018), particularly in a UK context. They have pre-existing knowledge of the higher education system and the role of the academic, prior to entering it. Their familial capital, coupled with their familial habitus with its 'deeply ingrained system of perspectives, experiences and predispositions family members share' (Reay, 1998, p. 527) provides an advantage in the elite, research-focused, higher education 'game'. They are better equipped to understand the 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Lareau et al., 2016) and more readily acquire the valued capital to enhance their power, and thus position, in the academic hierarchy—a tenured position at a research-intensive, 'elite' institution.

This prior parental sponsorship has enabled these guild-route academics to weather a period in their lives, possibly in their twenties and thirties, when others without the benefit of family-based social and financial support would not have been able to do so. This does not mean that they do not experience hardship and precarious employment, but if they leverage their capital successfully, they have far more opportunity to eventually gain a secure academic position. But this is as part of the conventional guild ritual whereby junior scholars are sifted. Otherwise joining the academic guild would not be considered a prestigious achievement. Taken together, their habitus combined with their social and cultural capital forms the basis for academic cronyism since they combine access to exclusive networks and the skills needed to exploit the opportunities to which these networks give rise.

In the literature, early career researchers (ECRs) from the guild route are often (mis)represented as members of the academic proletariat (Ylijoki & Henriksson, 2017). In reality, ECRs from a guild background are anything but a proletariat. In Ylijoki and Henriksson's (2017) study, all 12 of the participants were working full-time in research-intensive universities, having achieved doctoral degrees in the social sciences within the previous 6 years. The vast majority of them were, in other words, guild academics. The term 'ECR' is in itself an indicator of guild bias in the sense that it fails to take account of the breadth of backgrounds which academics come from (Price et al., 2015). Price and her colleagues recognise the excluding nature of this term and associated norms such as 'young', but in defining an alternative—the early career academic (ECA)—demonstrate their own guild assumptions by labelling an ECA as someone within 5 years of having completed their doctorate. Such a definition would necessarily exclude large swathes of non-guild academics who may well be experienced professionals or practitioners in various fields but do not possess a PhD. Other papers concerning the experiences of those on 'teaching-focused' contracts tend to overrepresent guild-route ECRs. Hubbard et al. (2015, p. 4) promise case studies illustrating 'a range of paths

into teaching positions' only to subsequently present the profiles of four 'guild-route' academics, all of whom completed a PhD and moved on to a postdoctoral fellowship in elite universities. This is, in reality, a singular, linear guild path. In another study of ECAs at two research-intensive universities, the 52 participants recruited by institutional mailing lists included just three who were on teaching-only contracts (Hollywood et al., 2019). This is an indicator of how academics on teaching-only contracts are still simply not thought of as ECAs, often because they are not within 5 years of having obtained a PhD. They may have obtained a PhD and spent more than 5 years in professional practice or industry and are now re-entering the sector. Quite commonly, they do not have a PhD on entry as a mature professional. Either way, they will probably have limited research experience.

Only non-guild-route entrants to the academic profession can lay claim to a proletarian identity since they do not possess the built-in advantages of 'insiderism' enjoyed by guild-route ECRs. Many non-guild entrants into the academic profession are from other professional or practice backgrounds, such as dentistry, law, marketing and business management. They are recruited to ensure that students on professional degree programmes are taught by university teachers with recent and relevant professional experience. While some may be members of other guild-like bodies (such as lawyers) it needs to be understood that by becoming an academic working in a university they are, in effect, entering a different guild and are therefore subject to a different set of rules, rituals and conventions, both social and linguistic. Their professional guild membership outside of academe provides no privileged access to the university guild. Further, individuals and groups can occupy different *fields* simultaneously (Thomson, 2012, p. 68); each field bestows effects upon position in the overarching social field and the potential to accumulate capital and dispositions of the habitus (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), which affect one's chance of social mobility and perpetuates cumulative advantage. The non-guild scholar with intimate knowledge and experience in a previous occupation may find that, upon entering the field of higher education, they are lower in the hierarchy; their existing capital holds little value in their new, academic field.

5 | POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

There are a number of policy implications arising from the analysis of academic social class offered in this paper, especially for research-intensive institutions where guild-route academics are most likely to be developed and recruited. While there is growing discussion about equality, diversity and inclusivity in universities, much of this debate centres on conventional and singular forms of disadvantage, such as race, gender and social class. Disadvantage needs to be understood more holistically in terms of the intersectionality of all forms of discrimination, rather than in terms of an over-reliance on 'discrete categories and groups' (Walby et al., 2012, p. 226) such as gender, race, sexuality and social class. Intersectionality is about the overlap of multiple dimensions. The effects of guild power overlap with race, gender and social class, and need to be understood as a key element of disadvantage in academic life that has been largely overlooked.

Our analysis suggests that academic social class and how it relates to advantage and disadvantage needs to be more deeply understood by reference to the guild concept. There is a need flowing from this realisation to better appreciate the moral case against the effects of academic patronage resulting from the exploitation of the capital accumulated by guild-route academics. This relates, perhaps most significantly, to recruitment practices within universities. Significant adjustments are needed to make them fairer and counteract the tendency to appoint internal candidates or closely related guild-route candidates. Breaking, or at least disrupting, this cycle of privilege is essential in stemming academic inbreeding. Serious attention needs to be given to introducing measures that ameliorate the effects of patronage and discriminate against non-guild-route academics. Examples include discontinuing the use of terms such as school or department 'fit', commonly used as a criterion used by interview panels. To ascertain the scale of the problem, a review of appointments to academic positions, both permanent and temporary, might be undertaken. This could establish the proportion of internal candidates, former PhD students and other guild-route academics appointed to the university, and the use of highly specific criteria such as special

experience in particular projects, designed to ensure that candidates within the social network are successful. However, possibly the biggest challenge is for institutions, and indeed many individual academics, to accept that guild-route privilege not only exists but represents a form of bias and discrimination at the heart of academic life which has deleterious consequences. Unless these effects of the academic class system are recognised, academic inbreeding will not be recognised as a cause of unfairness.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no data sets were generated or analysed during the current study.

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